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CHINA: Martial Law Imposed in Tibet

Martial law, imposed in Lhasa today, may quell protests through the 30th anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan uprising this Friday. All meetings, parades, and petitions are banned; all vehicles are subject to security checks; and foreigners must have special permission to remain in the city. A Beijing-controlled Hong Kong newspaper claims the protests have foreign support and criticizes foreigners, "including a small number of US politicians," for supporting calls for Tibetan independence.

Comment: Beijing's tough response and indirect criticism of the US Congress suggest it will use whatever force is necessary to suppress the unrest regardless of international criticism. China nonetheless remains at a loss on how to defuse underlying ethnic tensions. Unwilling to negotiate some form of Tibetan autonomy with the Dalai Lama, Chinese leaders may hope tougher measures will buy time for their development policies to weaken independence sentiment gradually. This strategy is likely to fail, however, and unrest is almost certain to recur over the longer term.

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